

**US Treasury ATF Report of Investigation 8/3/00**

DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY  
BUREAU OF ALCOHOL, TOBACCO AND FIREARMS  
REPORT OF INVESTIGATION

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<b>ADDRESSED TO:</b> Special Agent in Charge Seattle Field Division		<b>MONITORED INVESTIGATION INFORMATION:</b> Seattle Field Division FY-00 Report 001	
<b>TITLE OF INVESTIGATION:</b> Nieuw Amsterdam Ship Fire			
<b>CASE NUMBER:</b> 787010-00-0070		<b>REPORT NUMBER:</b> 1	

<b>TYPE OF REPORT: (Check Applicable Boxes)</b>				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	REPORT OF INVESTIGATION	<input type="checkbox"/>	COLLATERAL REPLY	
<input type="checkbox"/>	REPORT OF INTELLIGENCE	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<b>SUBMITTED BY (Name)</b> Donald J. Gillispie		<b>SUBMITTED BY (Title and Office)</b> Resident Agent in Charge, Anchorage Field Office		<b>SUBMITTED BY (Date)</b> 08/03/2000
<b>REVIEWED BY (Name)</b> Donald J. Gillispie		<b>REVIEWED BY (Title and Office)</b> Resident Agent in Charge, Anchorage Field Office		<b>REVIEWED BY (Date)</b>
<b>APPROVED BY (Name)</b> John C. Ross		<b>APPROVED BY (Title and Office)</b> Special Agent in Charge/DD, Seattle Field Division		<b>APPROVED BY (Date)</b>

**DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY:**

ATF Certified Fire Investigator (CFI) Origin and Cause determination of a ship fire.

**SYNOPSIS:**

On Thursday, May 25, 2000, Certified Fire Investigator Donald J. Gillispie responded to a ship fire aboard the M/V Nieuw Amsterdam, a cruise ship for the Holland America Line.

**NARRATIVE:**

1. On Wednesday, May 24, 2000, at 09:11 hours the A and B Fire Teams aboard the Nieuw Amsterdam responded to the report of fire on "D" deck. Upon arrival the Fire Teams found heavy smoke and heat in the starboard "D" deck passageway between watertight doors 15 and 16. Fire Team B made their way to "D" deck berthing cabin 98 and found a working fire in this compartment. This fire was quickly brought under control and extinguished within forty-five minutes.
2. ATF RAC/CFI Gillispie responded to the scene along with investigators LT. James Bartlett, US Coast Guard, LTJG. Bryan Johnson, US Coast Guard,

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and James H. Scheffer, Senior Marine Accident Investigator, National Transportation Board.

**PARTICIPATING FIRE INVESTIGATORS:**

3. LT. James Bartlett, US Coast Guard, Marine Safety Office, 2760 Sherwood Lane, Suite 2A, Juneau, Alaska.
- LTJG. Bryan Johnson, US Coast Guard, Marine Safety Office, 2760 Sherwood Lane, Suite 2A, Juneau, Alaska.
- James Scheffer, Senior Marine Accident Investigator, Office of Marine Safety, 409 L'Enfant Plaza East, SW, Washington, D.C.
- Kenneth Bissonnette, Investigation Staff Manager, Surveillance/Security Department, Carnival Cruise Lines, 3655 NW 87<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Miami, Florida, working for Holland America Lines.

**WITNESS STATEMENTS:**

4. This fire was reported by a Celreco 3000 smoke alarm which is monitored on the bridge. At the time of the alarm the Officer of the Watch ordered Quartermaster on Duty, Mohamad Hamin to go to cabin D-98 and investigate.
5. Quartermaster Mohamad Hamin was interviewed by LTJG Bryan Johnson aboard the M/V Nieuw Amsterdam on May 23, 2000. Hamin said that he was on the bridge when the first smoke alarm was received from cabin D-98. Hamin was directed by the Officer of the Watch to go to cabin D-98 and investigate. Hamin said when he got to the cabin he saw white smoke coming from around the door and out the vent. Hamin said he tried the door but it was locked but not hot. Hamin then pressed the local fire alarm button and called the bridge to report a fire. A passing sailor had a passkey and opened the door. Hamin said there was a lot of white smoke in the room. Hamin said he could not feel any heat from the fire. Hamin then proceeded from cabin to cabin attempting to alert sleeping crewmembers in the area.
6. Chief Mate Siep De Boer, was interviewed by LTJG Bryan Johnson on May 23, 2000 aboard the M/V Nieuw Amsterdam. De Boer said he was contacted

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by the Captain of the ship and directed to go to D-deck and clarify what was going on. De Boer immediately went to D-deck and saw the quartermaster at the fire screen door. De Boer verified the presence of fire to the bridge at 0915 hrs. De Boer saw light smoke in the starboard passageway. De Boer took a smoke mask and went into the space, waking people up and bringing them out of their cabins by shouting and banging on the doors. De Boer proceeded down the passageway to where it was apparent that heavier smoke was expanding from cabin D-98. De Boer saw that the door to D-98 was open. De Boer said that initially the smoke was white but turned black later and smelled like burning electrical insulation, like burning rubber. The smoke was approximately from neck to chest high in the passageway or three foot from the overhead. De Boer could not see any flames due to smoke, but could hear the sound of fire, like wood crackling. De Boer asked the Chief Engineer to charge the fire hose that was already rolled out. De Boer returned to D-98 with the fire hose and put some bursts of water in the room. At this point the smoke became too much and De Boer had to withdraw. De Boer left the fire hose and went to watertight door 15 where he met fire-team B. De Boer explained the situation to the assist team leader so the team would know what to expect. De Boer then left the scene and went to his assigned fire station.

7. 2<sup>nd</sup> Engineer Robert Dekker was interviewed by LTJG Bryan Johnson on May 25, 2000. Dekker said that he is the team leader for fire-team Bravo. Dekker went on to say that he and his team staged at watertight door 15 on "D" deck. Dekker was informed that a charged fire hose in the passageway just beyond the watertight door and that the fire was in cabin D-98. Dekker and team manually pumped open the watertight door and made their way to the charged hose. Dekker said the paint on the overhead in front of the watertight door was bubbling from heat. Dekker said after making entry into the fire area the team was spraying the overhead and bulkheads with water to cool them down. Dekker said as the team made its way down the passageway they sprayed water down the first corridor they came to. Dekker said this was the corridor by cabin D-110. They did not see any flames or glows down this corridor. Dekker said the team made its way to the second corridor and they could see a glow coming from cabin D-98. The team entered the corridor continuing to spray. The door was already open most of the way. The team sprayed around the door to get into the room because there was not enough room in the corridor to spray straight in. The team sprayed in the room for 5 or 10 minutes until there was no glow. Dekker said after the fire was

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extinguished his team was relieved. The reliving team started overhaul operations looking for hot spots in the area.

8. 3<sup>rd</sup> Engineer Onno DeVries was interviewed by LTJG Bryan Johnson on May 23, 2000 aboard the M/V Nieuw Amsterdam. DeVries said that he was on fire-team bravo during the fire fighting activities. DeVries said that he was the third man on the team carrying the radio and flashlight. DeVries said when the team got to D-98 the entire cabin was completely engulfed with flame and a slight orange glow of flame was discernable through the smoke. The fire sounded like burning newspaper. DeVries believed the fire was more prominent on the starboard side of the cabin where the table had been. DeVries said after the fire in cabin D-98 was extinguished his team was relieved. DeVries saw another fire-team pulling down overhead plates making sure there was no fire in the overhead.
9. Agus Sityawan, Galley Staff, and resident of D-98 was interviewed by LTJG Bryan Johnson on May 23 and 24, 2000 aboard the M/V Nieuw Amsterdam. Sityawan said he was one of four people who occupied D-98. Sityawan said that on the day of the fire he got up for work dressed and left for work before 0700 hours. Sityawan described the cabin as having a TV sitting on a wood pallet between the table and a clothing locker. Sityawan went on to say that the TV was plugged into a 220V outlet on the starboard bulkhead behind the table. Sityawan also said in the initial interview that the only other appliance plugged in was a stereo, which was plugged into an extension cord, which was plugged into a 110V outlet also on the starboard bulkhead behind the table. During this initial interview Sityawan said there were no cooking appliances in the cabin. During the interview on May 24, 2000 Sityawan admitted that there was a coffeemaker and what he described as a hot kettle also being used in the cabin. Sityawan said the coffeemaker was on sitting on the deck under the table on the forward side of the table base pole. Sityawan said that one of his cabin mates, Yueha Purnama, told him that Anton Wibobo, another cabin mate, had boiled an egg and made hot chocolate the morning of the fire. Sityawan said he did not see Wibobo cooking that morning because he was asleep. Sityawan said everybody in the cabin used the coffeemaker and hot kettle on a regular basis. Due to possible retaliation from cabin mates and other crew members Sityawan requested anonymity concerning this information.

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10. Yueha Purnama, Galley Staff, resident of D-98, was interviewed by LTJG Bryan Johnson on May 23 and 24, 2000 aboard the M/V Nieuw Amsterdam. During the initial interview Purnama said the electrical equipment in the cabin consisted of a TV, several small stereo systems, of which only one was plugged in, lamp and a DVD player, not plugged in. Purnama cited ship policy concerning cooking appliances and said the cabin did not contain any. Purnama went on to say that all outlets, two 110V and one 220V outlet were in good working order. Purnama said there was one extension cord approximately 5 to 10 feet in length being used. This extension cord had no bare wires sticking out. Purnama said that all four cabin mates smoke, but that no one was smoking the morning of the fire. On May 24, 2000 Purnama admitted that there were two cooking appliances in the cabin, a coffeemaker and a hot kettle. Purnama could not remember anyone cooking the morning of the fire. Purnama was again interviewed on May 25, 2000 by Ken Bissonnette, working for Holland America Line. During this interview Purnama admitted to going back to cabin D-98 at approximately 0900 hours to make a glass of tea. Purnama said that he used the coffeemaker to make this tea. Purnama sat his glass on the heating element of the coffeemaker ran water through the machine heating the water. Purnama said after making the tea he shut the coffeemaker off, but did not unplug it from the extension cord. Purnama said while he was drinking his tea he was paged by his supervisor so he left the cabin and went back to work. Purnama said he was in baggage room when the ship's fire alarm went off at 0915 hours.
11. Adri Suryadi, Housekeeping Staff, resident of D-98, was interviewed by LTJG Bryan Johnson on May 23 and 24, 2000 aboard the M/V Nieuw Amsterdam. During the initial interview Suryadi said to his knowledge there were no flammable materials in the cabin. Suryadi went on to say that all the cabin mates smoke, but no one was smoking the morning of the fire. Suryadi said that he was the first to leave for work on the morning of the fire. Suryadi said there were no cooking appliances in the cabin. On May 24, 2000 Suryadi was re-interviewed. During this interview Suryadi said there were two cooking appliances in the room, a coffeemaker and a hot kettle. Suryadi said he never used either appliance. Suryadi went on to say that his roommates used these appliances on a regular basis. Suryadi said that Anton Wibobo uses both devices most often and regularly uses the coffeemaker to make tea. Suryadi said he did not know if either the coffeemaker or hot kettle was plugged in the morning of the fire. Suryadi went on to say that the

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coffeemaker was sitting on the deck in front of the TV and the hot kettle was right beside the coffeemaker.

12. Anton Wibobo, Galley Staff, resident of D-98, was interviewed by LTJG Bryan Johnson on May 23 and 24, 2000 aboard the M/V Nieuw Amsterdam. Wibobo said that he left the cabin at about 0650 hours to go to work on May 23, 2000. Wibobo said all of the cabin mates left for work at about the same time and that he was not the last person out of the cabin. Wibobo said that he knew of only two electrical appliances in the cabin a TV and a stereo. Wibobo said there were no cooking appliances in the cabin. Wibobo also said no one had been smoking in the cabin the morning of the fire. Wibobo was not aware of any flammable materials in the cabin. Wibobo could not recall any problems with the electrical outlets or wiring in the room. On May 24, 2000 Wibobo was re-interviewed. Wibobo said that he never saw or heard of any cooking appliances in the cabin. Wibobo said that there was no coffeemaker or hot kettle in the cabin. Wibobo went on to say neither he nor his cabin mates ever made coffee, tea, or hot chocolate in the cabin. Wibobo was basically evasive in his answers and uncooperative. When asked to write a statement he indicated he could not write in English. His verbal communications skills in English had apparently also diminished since the previous day.

**SHIP/VESSEL DESCRIPTION:**

13. This is a steel hulled twin screw, medium speed diesel, geared drive, 33,930 gross tons passenger ship. The M/V Nieuw Amsterdam, Official Number 1983-M-57 is approximately 705 foot long and 90 foot wide. This ship is capable of transporting 1,374 passengers with a crew of 566. The M/V Nieuw Amsterdam is owned by Holland America Lines and registered in the Netherlands. This ship is home ported in Seattle, Washington. The M/V Nieuw Amsterdam was steaming off the Alaska Coast in Glacier Bay near Tarr Inlet. The M/V Nieuw Amsterdam had departed Juneau, Alaska and was en route, on a scenic tour, to Seward, Alaska. This fire was contained to crew cabin D-98.
14. Cabin D-98 is located on "D" deck starboard side amid ship. D-98 is a steel bulkhead compartment used for crews quarters. The bulkheads were insulated and fire resistant rated either B-15 or B-30 depending on their location. This space is approximately 13'4" from fore to aft, and approximately 9'6" port to starboard. The compartment door faces aft

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into a passageway going port to starboard. This passageway empties into the starboard "D" deck passageway. This compartment housed four crewmembers in stacked bunk beds attached to the bulkheads. One bunk bed was attached to the forward bulkhead, with the second bunk bed attached to the port bulkhead in the port-forward corner. Two wood clothes closets were attached to the bulkhead at the foot of the port bunk bed. There was a sink located on the port bulkhead in the aft-port corner, behind the door. Another clothes closet was located in the aft-starboard corner. Stacked along the starboard bulkhead were crews personnel suitcases and stereo gear. There was a table bolted to the deck approximately 6' forward of the aft bulkhead, this table was approximately 3' from the starboard bulkhead. This table had a metal center pole as the base, with a wood tabletop. There was a wood clothes closet against the starboard bulkhead approximately 3' forward of the table. This compartment had one fluorescent light fixture attached to the starboard bulkhead just below the overhead serving the compartment. This compartment was electrically serviced with one 220V outlet and two 110V outlets located about four foot above the deck on the starboard bulkhead.

**SCENE PROCESSING:**

15. On May 25, 2000 at approximately 0845 hours the Fire Investigators arrived at the docked M/V Nieuw Amsterdam in Seward, Alaska. A briefing was conducted with Holland America Line Westours Inc., Legal counsel and Management Staff. During this briefing a list of witnesses to be interviewed was devised. It was determined that James Scheffer, LT Bartlett, and LTJG Johnson would conduct crew interviews.
16. An examination of the exterior of the ship was conducted. No visible damage was observed.
17. An examination of the interior of the ship was then conducted. A systematic approach was used. There was no signs of visible damage to the interior until the investigators made their way to the hatch on "C" deck going down to "D" deck at watertight door 16. At this location it was observed that there was some light smoke damage to the bulkheads around the hatch on "C" deck. Making their way down the ladder to "D" deck it was observed that there was very little damage on the forward side of the fire screen door to the aft starboard passageway. No damage was observed forward of watertight door 16. An examination of the area



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aft of watertight door 15 starboard side was conducted. This area was in pristine condition. An examination of the starboard passageway between watertight doors 15 and 16 was conducted. It was observed that a smoke and heat level was present on the bulkheads. From watertight door 16 the heat level was approximately 1' foot from the overhead emanating aft in a descending pattern to a level of approximately 2' above the deck at the second aft port/starboard passageway junction. An examination of the starboard aft section of the starboard passageway from watertight door 15 was conducted. This examination was forward from watertight door 15. It was observed that the smoke/heat level in this area descend from the overhead approximately 1' foot emanating forward to the same port/starboard passageway junction observed from watertight door 16. This heat level descended to a level approximately 2' above the deck.

18. The port/starboard passageway junction was examined. It was observed that the starboard passageway exhibited a higher heat level than the port side passageway indicating fire emanating from the port side of the "D" deck starboard side passageway. The port side passageway was examined. It was observed that the aft bulkhead exhibited low burning to the bulkhead covering to approximately 6" above the deck from the junction to approximately 10' port. It was observed that the forward bulkhead exhibited a "V" pattern emanating from the door of cabin D-98 directly in front of the low burn patten on the aft bulkhead of the passageway indicating fire coming from the interior of cabin D-98.
19. Cabin D-98 was examined. It was observed that the door to this cabin exhibited burn patterns on both the front and back indicating that the door was open during the fire. It was observed that the starboard bulkhead exhibited greater heat and flame impingement than the port bulkhead. It was also observed that the port side of the room exhibited higher burn patterns than the starboard bulkhead indicating heat and flame from the starboard side of the room. It was observed that the forward section of the room exhibited high burning indicating a heat source in the aft section of the cabin. It was observed that the clothes closet in the starboard/aft corner exhibited more severe burning in the top portion of the cabinet than the lower section. Indicating a heat source forward of the aft section. An examination of the area around the bolted metal support pole for the table was conducted. It was observed that suitcases and personal items stored behind the table against the starboard bulkhead exhibited burning and melting from the

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front side of the items to the bulkhead. The front side of these items exhibited burning and melting at deck level. It was observed that the metal table support pole exhibited oxidation on the forward side of the pole, with paint still adhered to the pole on the aft side. It was observed that a metal pipe approximately 11' forward of the aft bulkhead on the starboard side approximately 6" from the starboard bulkhead exhibited oxidation to the top section aft side. This pipe exhibited heavy carbon deposits on the lower section. It was observed that a clothes closet between this pipe and the forward bunk bed on the starboard side exhibited heavier burning on the upper section than on the lower section, with more damage on the aft side. Debris in the cabin was examined systematically layering to the deck. Items of interest were examined as they were uncovered. During this examination the TV was examined. It was observed that damage to the TV was from the exterior to the interior. It was observed that the TV was sitting just above deck level on a wood pallet. This pallet was examined. It was observed that deep charring had occurred to the aft front section of the pallet. It was also observed that deeper charring was present on the interior side of the forward support member, with the exterior side exhibiting less charring. Stereo equipment found in the debris was examined and found unremarkable. Hand tooling debris on the deck uncovered a charred coffeemaker, and a heating element for what was later described as a hot kettle. These items were found on the deck forward side of the metal table support pole. The coffeemaker was found approximately 3" from this pole with the heating element next to the coffeemaker. The coffeemaker exhibited heating and melting from the exterior to the interior. The heating element remnants of the hot kettle exhibited metal distortion by heat indicating interior heating. During this examination it was observed that electrical wires extended from the coffeemaker and heating element to the starboard bulkhead. These wires were examined and found unremarkable. An examination of a mirror cabin (D-100) disclosed that the both the 220V and 110V electrical outlets were located on the bulkhead just above the cabin table. Both the coffeemaker and heating element were X-rayed using the ships medical X-ray machine. The X-ray negative of the coffeemaker was unremarkable. A thermal protection device was not observed on the X-ray negative of the heating element to the hot kettle. During an interior examination of the coffeemaker the bottom plate was opened. It was observed that the heating element and all related tubes and wiring were in pristine condition. During the examination of cabin D-98 the contents of a trash can found under the sink in the aft/starboard corner

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were examined. The trash can contained cigarette butts, paper, a hot chocolate package, and both halves of an eggshell.

**EXPOSURES:**

20. There was no fire progression to other areas.

**NUMBER OF FATALITIES AND/OR INJURIES:**

21. There were no injuries as a result of this fire.

**ESTIMATED VALUE OF LOSS:**

22. The estimated value of loss was approximately \$365,000.00

**WEATHER:**

23. Partly cloudy with a temperature in the mid 50°'s Fahrenheit.

**FIRE SUPPRESSION:**

24. Fire suppression methods did not substantially alter the condition of the scene.

**CONCLUSION:**

25. The area of origin of the fire was at deck level on the forward side of the metal table support pole. The cause of the fire was a thermal runaway in the electric hot kettle. This was an accidental fire

**DISPOSITION:**

This investigation is closed 09.